

The Ur III Tablets in the Valdosta State University Archives

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§0. The Valdosta State University Archives, part of the Odum Library at Valdosta State University (located in Valdosta, Georgia, on the Florida border) holds eight cuneiform tablets dating to the Ur III period (ca. 2112-2004 BC according to the middle chronology). These tablets were brought to my attention by Ms. Deborah Davis, Archives Librarian at Odum Library, who was also kind enough to provide the images of the tablets on which the following edition is based. These tablets, like many small collections found in libraries throughout the United States, were sold to Valdosta State in the early 1920's by Edgar J. Banks. Several letters preserved in the archives along with the tablets indicate that they were offered to a Professor R. H. Powell in April of

1920 by Banks (writing from Alpine, New Jersey, in this case). All ten tablets described in the original letter remain in the archives, but two tablets (nos. 9 and 10) have, in the intervening years, disintegrated, and no longer seem to preserve any cuneiform writing. In the correspondence from Banks kept with the tablets in the archives, he suggests that tablet 9 dated to the time of Hammurapi, while tablet 10 was Neo-Babylonian in date. I should emphasize that I have not inspected the tablets themselves, but have worked entirely from images of them. A preliminary edition of the preserved eight tablets is offered here pending future examination of the tablets themselves.

§1. Valdosta 1 (Umma, Amar-Suen year 1)

obv.

1. $\frac{1}{3}$ (diš) ma-na ša₃-gu sig²
2. ki a-DU-ta
3. la-ni-mu šu ba-ti
(1 line blank)

*$\frac{1}{3}$ mina of ... šagu
from ADU
Lanimu received.*

rev.

- (blank space)
1. mu ^damar-^dsuen lugal

Year: "Amar-Suen (is) king" (Amar-Suen, year 1)

§1.1. This is an account of the transfer of one-third of a mina (ca. 170 grams) of a commodity associated with flax and the production of linen from ADU to Lanimu.

desideratum. In *SET* 274, rev. col. i, line 19, ša₃-gu occurs in a large garment production account in which it is found among a list of slightly unusual raw materials such as gada sag₁₀ 'high-quality linen' and siki kur-ra 'foreign wool'.

§1.2. The meaning of ša₃-gu remains uncertain. It seems fairly clear that it is associated with flax and the production of linen (see Potts 1997: 117-119 for a brief overview of flax and linen production in Mesopotamia). Waetzoldt (1983: 585-586), in the context of a much more extensive discussion of linen in Mesopotamia, also notes that a secure translation of ša₃-gu is still a

§1.3. Lanimu is found in other texts that deal with the transportation of flax/linen to the linen garment workshops in Ur (see, for instance, *BIN* 5, 168, in which Lanimu receives a shipment of ša₃-gu bound for Ur from Dadaga, the governor of Umma, and *MVN* 20, 202, in which Lanimu receives ša₃-gu from Din-

gira [dingir-ra] in Ur). Linen production seems to have been centered in Ur, capital of the Ur III empire, as we might expect due to the association of linen garments with social elites in other societies, but I do not know of any study of such an association in Mesopotamia. Although the word bala “transfer; term of office” occurs in several texts that also mention Lanimu, it remains unclear whether or not Lanimu was participating in the well-known but poorly understood bala-system. At least upon initial inspection, there is a substantial possibility that Lanimu is involved in the bala-system if only because the person from whom he receives the ša₃-gu, namely ADU, occurs in a number of records bearing the designation ša₃ bala-a that Sharlach (2004) lists in the appendix to her volume on the bala (Chart 2.14, pp. 289-311): SAT 2, 599 (labor), Princeton 1, 234 (reeds), UTI 3, 1603 (reeds), SANTAG 6, 278 [Koslova 278 in Sharlach] (baskets), BCT 2, 16 (sheep), and MVN 14, 289 (reeds).

§1.4. With one important exception, Lanimu never occurs in a text designated ša₃ bala-a. A brief review of tablets that mention Lanimu may provide some degree of clarity however. The tablets that mention Lanimu cluster on the basis of a series of administrative terms that make mention of the city of Ur (uri₅^{ki}): six tablets dating from the 45th year of Šulgi to the first year of Amar-Suen include the phrase uri₅^{ki}-še₃, “to Ur” (MVN 20, 162; Orient 16, 62 70; CTNMC 40; BIN 5, 168; SACT 2, 154; Valdosta 1); six tablets dating to roughly

the same period of time include the phrase ša₃ uri₅^{ki}-ma, “inside of Ur” (AR RIM 4, 2; BIN 5, 154; MVN 20, 1; SANTAG 6, 83; Ontario 2, 139; SAT 2, 654). Seven tablets that also mention Lanimu and date to roughly the same period of time include the characteristic phrase zi-ga uri₅^{ki}-ma, “expended in Ur” (CST 659a; MVN 20, 202; SNAT 297; SACT 1, 69; SACT 2, 253; Syracuse 389; TCNU 451).

§1.5. Lastly, a small number of tablets include the word bala in accounts that also mention Lanimu (bala-a uri₅^{ki}-ma [MVN 15, 35 obv. 2]; [zi]-ga bala-a ša₃ nibru^{ki} u₃ ša₃ uri₅^{ki}-ma [BIN 5, 4 obv. 13]; bala ša₃ uri₅^{ki}-ma [MVN 21, 6 obv. 3]). SANTAG 6, 38 rev. 9, seems to include the telltale phrase ša₃ bala-a, “inside of the bala-system,” which can be interpreted as a designation of the bala-system with some confidence, but I would like to raise the possibility that this is an error for a phrase such as the one in BIN 5, 4, above (zi-ga ša₃ bala-a / uri₅^{ki}-ma for an expected zi-ga bala-a ša₃ uri₅^{ki}-ma, “booked out (and) transferred in Ur”). Other than this single occurrence, the phrase ša₃ bala-a seems to have been studiously avoided in Lanimu’s accounts. In my view, the proper interpretation of phrases such as zi-ga bala-a remains an open question in spite of Sharlach’s confidence that bala-a is to be interpreted as a noun in the genitive case (“of the bala-system”) rather than a nominalized verb (“that which has been transferred”). See Sharlach 2004, 115-121 for evidence in favor of interpreting these texts as part of the bala-system.

§2. Valdosta 2 (Drehem, Šulgi, year 43)

obv.

1. 1(diš) sila₄ dⁿen-lil₂
2. 1(diš) sila₄ dⁿin-lil₂
3. mu-DU zabar-dab₅
4. 1(diš) sila₄ dⁿin-ḥur-sag
5. 1(diš) sila₄ d^šul-pa-e₃
6. mu-DU kur-giri₃-ni-<<ni>>-še₃
7. zabar-dab₅ maškim
8. 1(diš) maš-da₃ e₂ uz-ga

rev.

1. mu-DU a²-tu
2. ur-d^šul-gi-ra maškim
3. 1(diš) sila₄ dⁿen-lil₂
4. mu-DU lugal-nir-gal₂
5. i-sa₃-ri₂-ik maškim
6. 1(diš) udu 1(diš) ud₅ ba x [⌈]E₂ [⌋]
7. u₄ 3(diš)-kam
(double rule)
8. mu en dⁿnanna maš-e i₃-pa₃

*One lamb (for) Enlil,
one lamb (for) Ninlil,
delivery of the zabardab.
One lamb (for) Ninhursag,
one lamb (for) Šulpa'e,
delivery of Kur-giriniše.
The zabardab was the responsible official.
One antelope (for) the E'uzga,*

*delivery of Atu.
Ur-Šulgira was the responsible official.
One lamb (for) Enlil.
delivery of Lugal-nirgal.
Issarik was the responsible official.
One sheep and one nanny goat ...
on the third day.*

*Year: “The en priestess of Nanna was chosen via extispicy”
(Šulgi year 43).*

§2.1. This text consists of a list of animals that were taken from the central stock-yards in Drehem for offerings to several deities.

§2.2. The *zabar-dab₅* was an official whose name originally meant “the one who holds the mirror, lit. the bronze” (Foxvog 1980: 74; Steinkeller 1987). The *zabar-dab₅* played an important role in the texts that document deliveries of animals to the cults of the various deities that the state maintained in Nippur (Lafont

§3. Valdosta 3 (Drehem, Amar-Suen, year 4, month 4)
obv.

1. 3(diš) sila₄
2. 1(u) 7(diš) ᵀ maš₂ ᵀ
3. ša₃ uri₅^{ki}-ma
4. u₄ 3(u) la₂ 1(diš^{tenu})-kam
5. ki ab-ba-sa₆-ga-ta

rev.

1. na-lu₅ i₃-dab₅
(1 line blank)
2. iti ki-siki-^dnin-a-zu
3. mu en ^dnanna ba-ḥun

left edge

1. 2(u)

§3.1. Here we have a receipt for a group of lambs and goats originally from Ur that were transferred from the account of Abbasaga, the head of the Drehem administration, to the bureau of Nalu, one of his deputies. Another document would have recorded the transfer of these to animals to one or more cultic centers in either Nippur or perhaps in this case Ur (see Johnson 2004 [CDLB 2004:2] for an example of such a transfer).

§3.2. Because of the somewhat unusual composition of the herd in this text and the precise dating of the tablet, this herd can be identified in another document: *RA* 10, 210 (BM 103413). *RA* 10, 210 records the deliveries of animals made to Abbasaga from the household of the divinized king Šulgi over the course of one year (Amar-Suen 4). One of the deliveries mentioned in *RA* 10, 210, is as follows (*RA* 10, 210, obv. i, lines 6-10)

1983) and it has been suggested that the *zabar-dab₅* was the highest cultic official in the Ur III state (see Salla-berger 1999: 186-188 for details).

§2.3. The personal name *i-sa₃-ri₂-ik* is interesting in that it is a sandhi writing of a fairly common Semitic personal name *issu-arik* meaning ‘his arm is long’ (Hilgert 2002: 74; see p. 571 for a list of texts in which this orthography occurs).

*(For) three lambs and
17 male goats
in Ur,
on the 29th day,
from Abba-saga*

Nalu assumed administrative responsibility.

Month: “The ... of Ninazu” (4th month).

Year: “The en priestess of Nanna was appointed” (Amar-Suen, year 4).

20 (animals in total).

- | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| 6. 3(diš) sila ₄ | <i>Three lambs,</i> |
| 7. 1(u) 7(diš) maš ₂ | <i>17 male goats,</i> |
| 8. giri ₃ ^d nanna-lu ₂ -du ₁₀ | <i>via Nanna-ludu,</i> |
| 9. u ₄ 3(u) la ₂ 1(diš ^{tenu})-kam | <i>on the 29th day</i> |
| 10. ša ₃ uri ₅ ^{ki} -ma | <i>in Ur.</i> |

§3.4. The fact that the date and the rather unusual composition of the herd coincide guarantees that the two documents are related. Clearly, Abbasaga received the herd from Ur or perhaps was responsible for accounting for them even through they remained in Ur—the terminology (ša₃ uri₅^{ki}-ma, “in Ur”) would seem to favor the latter interpretation. Once the herd had been “received” by Abbasaga, he turned them over to Nalu, and when Nalu assumed control of the group of animals he generated Valdosta 3 to reflect the transfer of responsibility. Hilgert has dealt with Nalu’s role in the administrative of Drehem to a limited extent in several publications (Hilgert 1998: 15-16; 2003: 64-65).

§4. Valdosta 4 (Amar-Suen, year 5, month 10)

obv.

1. 2(diš) anše edin-na
2. 2(diš) ud₅ šimaški₂
3. ba-ug₇
4. u4 2(u) 6(diš)-kam

*Two onagers and
two Šimaškian nanny goats
slaughtered;
on the 26th day,*

rev.

1. ki lugal-ḫe₂-gal₂-ta
2. ^dšul-gi-iri-gu₁₀
3. šu ba-ti
4. iti ezem-an-na
5. mu en-unu₆-gal ^dinanna ba-ḫun

*from Lugalḫegal
Šulgi'irigu
received.
Month: "Festival of An" (month 10, Ur/Drehem).
Year: "Enunugal was appointed as (the en priest of) Inanna"
(Amar-Suen, year 5).*

§4.1. This document records Šulgi-irigu's receipt of the carcasses of four animals from Lugal-ḫegal. The Lugal-ḫegal attested here falls within the known career of a Lugal-ḫegal who was a "member of the ruling family of Umma" (Dahl 2003: 259) and seemed to have been involved in the care and feeding of working animals

such as the onagers mentioned in this text (see Stepien 1996: 38 and 142-143). Although it is plausible that the Lugal-ḫegal in this text is the lugal-ḫe₂-gal₂ dumu ur-nigar^{gar} mentioned by Dahl and Stepien, I have not yet been able to demonstrate this conclusively.

§5. Valdosta 5 (Umma, šu-Suen, year 3, month 2, day 7)

obv.

1. 1(diš) dug dida 5(diš) sila₂ kaš sag₁₀
2. 1(ban₂) ninda 2(diš) gin₂ i₃ 2(diš) gin₂ naga
3. 3(diš) ku₆ 3(diš) sa sum
4. a-gu-^r a sukkal^r gaba-^r aš^r
5. 1(diš) dug ^r dida 6(diš)^r sila₃^r [i₃]
6. 1(ban₂) [ninda] 2(diš) ^r gin₂^r [i₃ 2(diš) gin₂ naga]
7. ^r 3(diš) ku₆^r [3(diš) sa sum]

*One pot (ca. 20 liters) of dida beer, five sila (ca. 5 liters) of high-quality beer,
one ban (ca. 10 liters) of bread, two shekels (ca. 30cc) of oil and two shekels of alkali,
three fish and three bunches of onions,
Agu'a, the messenger, (sent) to Persia.
One pot of dida beer, six shekels of oil,
one ban of bread, two shekels of oil, two shekels of alkali,
three fish and three bunches of onions,*

rev.

1. i₃-kal-^r la sukkal^r [...]
2. 3(diš) sila₃ kaš 2(diš) sila₃ [ninda]
3. 2(diš) gin₂ i₃ 2(diš) gin₂ ^r naga^r
4. ^r 1(diš)^r ku₆ 1(diš) sa sum
5. du₁₀-ga-mu ka-us₂-sa₂
6. ŠU+LAGAB 2(diš) dug dida du 1(ban₂)
7. ŠU+LAGAB 5(diš) sila₃ kaš sag₁₀
ŠU+LAGAB 6(diš) gin₂ i₃²
8. ŠU+LAGAB 2(ban₂) 2(diš) sila₃ ninda
ŠU+LAGAB 6(diš) gin₂ i₃
9. ŠU+LAGAB 6(diš) gin₂ naga
10. ŠU+LAGAB 7(diš) ku₆ ŠU+LAGAB 7(diš) sa sum
11. u₄ 7(diš)-kam iti sig₄-^{gar}i₃-šub-ba-gar

*Ikala, the messenger,
Three sila of beer, two sila of bread,
two shekels of oil, two shekels of alkali,
one fish, one bunch of onions,
Dugamu the
Total: two pots of average-quality dida beer (made with) one ban (of barley);
total: five liters of high-quality beer;
total: 6 shekels of oil;
total: 2 ban 2 sila of bread;
total: six shekels of oil;
total: six shekels of alkali;
total: seven fish; total: seven bunches of onions.
On the 7th day, month: "Bricks are placed in the moulds"
(Month 2)*

§5.1. This is a record of distributions to sukkals, 'court messengers/officials' and a ka-us₂-sa₂. sukkals regularly traveled far and wide, carrying out the business of the royal court, and in this text they receive the types of

food that were the standard fare: beer and bread, fish and oil. The term naga, which is conventionally translated as 'alkali', has been dealt with by Butz (1984: 283-286), where he suggests several possible interpretations,

including its use as soap or as a softening agent for the dried fish that often occur in messenger texts. Or, alternatively, naga may be a cover term for a variety of plant

derivatives. Yoshikawa has explained gaba-aš “to the chest” as a shorthand that was used in Umma for trips to Elam, east of Mesopotamia (Yoshikawa 1988).

§6. Valdosta 6 (Umma, Ibbi-Suen, year 2, month 8)

obv.

1. 1(diš) tug₂ gu₂-na
2. ki i₃-kal-la-ta
3. mu a-gu-še₃
4. kišib₃ a-a-kal-la

*One “neck” garment
from Ikala,
for/in place of Agu,
the sealed tablet of Ayakala.*

rev.

(1 line blank)
(seal)

1. iti e₂-iti-6(diš)
2. mu en ^dinanna unu^{ki} maš₂-e i₃-pa₃

*Month: “The six-month house” (8th month).
Year: “the en priest of Inanna of Uruk was chosen by extispicy”
(Ibbi-Suen, year 2).*

seal

1. a-a-kal-la
2. dub-sar
3. dumu er₂-dingir

*Ayakala,
scribe,
son of Er-dingir.*

§6.1. This document records the transfer of a garment from Ikala, presumably the well-known administrator in charge of textile production in Umma (Waetzoldt 1972: 101; Dahl 2003: 184), to a person named Ayakala on behalf of Agu (mu a-gu-še₃). Although the date on this tablet falls within the tenure of Ayakala, the equally well-known governor of Umma, the Ayakala mentioned in this text is not the governor of Umma: the seal impression on the tablet clearly indicates that the Ayakala in our text is a-a-kal-la dumu er₂-dingir, “Ayakala, the son of Er-dingir,” whereas the governor of Umma was the son of Ur-nigar (a-a-kal-la dumu ur-nigar^{gar}).

whose name appears in a number of documents, presumably er₂-dingir dumu lugal-sa₆-ga (see, for example, the seal impression of *MVN* 13, 190)—only one person with the name Er-dingir seems to be active in Umma at the time when this tablet was written, but further proof would be needed for a positive identification. Er-dingir is also mentioned in *OLP* 8, 24, 21, a list of the staff members and religious specialists at a number of institutions in Umma: Er-dingir is the last entry in a list of two dozen individuals who are described as gudu₄ ^dšara₂ umma^{ki}, “gudu priests of the god Šara of Umma” (rev., col. iv, lines 33-34). Note as well that the seal impression mentioned above (see *MVN* 13, 190) describes Er-dingir’s “occupation” as “servant of the god Šara” (ARAD₂ ^dšara₂), a fitting title for a member of her priesthood.

§6.2. While the Ayakala mentioned in this text is not otherwise attested in the textual record, the Er-dingir who is mentioned as his father is probably a gudu priest

§7. Valdosta 7 (Drehem, Šu-Suen, year 2, month 8)

obv.

1. 1(diš) gu₄ PI-li nu-banda₃
2. 1(diš) gu₄ KA[?] i₃-kal-la
3. gu₄[?] a₂-pi₅-lum
4. ki-ba ba-na-a-ga₂-ar[?]
5. giri₃ lu₂-^den-ki
6. x x x

*One ox (for) Pili, the overseer,
one ox ... Ikala,
oxen from Apilum,
put in its place on his behalf
by means of Lu-Enki,
...*

rev.

1. x ab₂ 5(diš) udu x
2. 2(u) 8(diš) udu 3(diš) ud₅ x

*... cows and five ... sheep,
28 sheep and 3 goats ... ,*

3. ba-ug₇ e₂ muḫaldim-še₃²
4. mu aga₃-us₂-e-ne-še₃²
5. u₄ 2(diš)-kam
6. ki du₁₁-ga-ta ba-zi
7. giri₃ nu-ur₂-diškur dub-sar
8. iti šu-eš₅-ša
9. mu ma₂ dara₄-abzu ba-ab-du₈

*have been slaughtered for the kitchen,
for the soldiers,
on the second day;
booked out of (account of) Duga,
by means of Nur-Adad, the scribe.
Month: šu'ešša (8th month, Drehem).
Year: "The boat (named) 'the ibex of the Abzu' was caulked"
(Šu-Suen year 2).*

left edge

1. 3(diš)² [gu₄ ab₂] 3(u)¹² 6(diš)² udu

Three [oxen and cows] and 36 small cattle (in total).

§7.1. This text is heavily sealed and will need to be re-edited once it is baked and cleaned. Nonetheless, I offer a transliteration on the basis of the available image if only so as to encourage further work on the tablet. The name in the first line on the obverse is particularly rare, having only one other occurrence in the CDLI corpus, namely *PDT 2*, 959, rev., col. iii, line 20. Note

that the total on the left edge is quite badly damaged, so the reconstruction I offer here is somewhat tentative. I would also like to thank the anonymous referee for several improvements to the provisional transliteration offered here. The referee also notes that the seal-cap impressions on Valdosta 7 may suggest that the seal is that of Ur-Shulpa'e (cf. Hilgert 2003, 605ff.).

§8. Valdosta 8 (Amar-Suen, year 2)

obv.

1. 6(diš) tug₂ uš-bar tur sumun
2. 2(diš) tug₂ ša₃-ga-du₃ sumun
3. mu uš-bar x
4. 2(diš) tug₂ uš-bar tur
5. 1(diš) tug₂ uš-bar zu₂ uḫ

*Six old small "weaver" garments,
two old šagadu garments,
... (for) the weavers.
Two small "weaver" garments,
one moth-eaten "weaver" garment.*

rev.

1. mu ^damar-^dsuen lugal-e ur-bi₂-lum mu-ḫul
2. ki ensi₂-ka-ta
3. kišib₃ i₃-kal-la
4. ur-^dšara₂-ke₄ ba-an-dab_x(U₈)

*Year: "Amar-Suen, the king, destroyed Urbilum" (Amar-Suen,
year 2).
From the governor,
sealed tablet of Ikalā,
Ur-Šara assumed administrative responsibility for (them).*

seal

1. [ur-^dšara₂]
2. dub-sar
3. dumu lugal-[ušur₄]

*[Ur-Šara],
scribe,
son of Lugal-[ušur].*

§8.1. This document is a receipt for a small group of low-quality garments that are being transferred from the office of the governor (ki ensi₂-ka-ta) to Ikalā, the chief administrator of textile production in Umma. Since the maintenance of the laborers at the textile mill managed by Ikalā was often the responsibility of ur-^dšara₂ dumu lugal-ušur_{3/4}, a well-known chief administrator or archivist (ša₁₃-dub-ba) in this period, and since Ur-šara assumes responsibility for the garments, the simplest explanation is that these were old garments that the governor returned to Ikalā for the use of the weavers themselves. A number of accounts document Ur-Šara's role in distributing and maintain-

ing labor forces for institutions such as Ikalā's weaving mill (see, for example, *MCS 3*, 54 (BM 113005), an account of labor transferred to the account of Ikalā). One aspect of managing these laborers would have been to provide garments for them as in this text, but also seen elsewhere (*TCNU 607*, an account that mentions 891 tug₂ uš-bar garments that were debited to Ikalā's account by Ur-Šara). See also *SANTAG 6*, 67, in which Ur-šara seals a tablet that documents the repayment of a debt (la₂-ia₃ su-ga) by Ikalā on behalf of Ur-Iškur, a fuller (azlag₂), who was presumably attached to Ikalā's textile production center.

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